

SALT Survives Tough Test, Picks Up Support of Byrd

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The SALT II treaty has cleared what may prove to be its last major obstacle in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, without any significant changes on the controversial issue of treaty verification.

The treaty also picked up the strong endorsement of Senate Democratic leader Robert Byrd of West Virginia.

The committee yesterday rejected proposed changes by Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, which some observers thought might qualify as "godfather amendments," as well as what the Carter administration calls "killer amendments."

In the jargon spawned by treaty consideration, a godfather amendment is one that is so politically attractive that it presents an offer too good to be refused. A killer amendment is one that would doom the treaty to lengthy, perhaps fruitless renegotiation with the Soviet Union.

Glenn's proposals were aimed at building both the capability and confidence of the United States in verifying Soviet compliance with the treaty.

While Byrd's outright support had long been expected, treaty supporters were glad to see him finally "strapping on his fighting gear" to quote one supporter.

Byrd said his final concerns regarding the treaty and U.S. strategic posture had been resolved when he received written assurances from President Carter that the president intended to press ahead with new cruise missiles, and with a new

generation of intercontinental missile called MX.

Byrd predicted a treaty vote this year, after the Senate finishes energy legislation. "My present inclination is to go with the treaty (bring it to a vote) win or lose," he said, adding that it might prove impossible to predict the outcome because some senators will not declare themselves until they vote.

In the meantime, he said he was seriously concerned that the stand taken by Republican presidential candidates against SALT was resulting in a partisan treatment of issues that should be decided on grounds of national security.

It appeared to be a reference to Sen. Howard Baker of Tennessee, Senate Republican leader and an opponent of SALT II.

Glenn's proposals were voted on in a committee session held in strict secrecy because verification involves some of the most secret U.S. intelligence methods and devices.

One proposal would have required that the Soviet Union agree not to impede U.S. monitoring of the information radioed back from Russian test rockets to ground stations. It lost 9-6.

The second proposal would have required that the Soviet Union agree to notify the United States before it conducts intercontinental missile tests within its own borders. It lost 10-5.

After the secret session, Glenn said that he was disappointed at the loss but encouraged by the over-all course of treaty examination. He repeated his earlier position that his own vote depended on whether lost U.S. verification capability could be rebuilt.

"I'm hopeful we'll be in a favorable situation when it comes time to vote on this," he said, adding it was possible improvements could be made in time to allow him to vote for the treaty this year.

Sen. Frank Church of Idaho, For-

eign Relations chairman, said yesterday he expected the committee to complete line-by-line consideration of the bill by the end of next week, despite reports circulating in the Senate that opponents were considering a last-minute rash of amendments to keep the treaty in committee.

The committee actions taken so far have been tentative. Committee members will have a last chance to propose changes and conditions in any part of the treaty package during final consideration next week. If the markup is completed by next week, the treaty could be reported to the Senate as early as Nov. 15.

The only major issue still to be tackled by the committee involves proposals to limit the Soviet Backfire bomber beyond those already added to the treaty.

One committee source said yesterday that Church has developed a working majority of "eight unshakable votes" for the treaty that should forestall any "killer" Backfire amendment. The meant Glenn's proposals were probably the last difficult ones with which the committee will have to deal.

Even supporters of the treaty acknowledge it is still in serious trouble on the floor, where its chances of ratification are "too close to call" as one Senate source put it last night.